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## The Sisters of Charity in Vincennes, Indiana

By

ELLIN M. KELLY, PH.D.

Bishop John Carroll's concern for the remote outpost of his huge diocese, Fort Vincennes, prompted him to consider sending a priest to care for the spiritual needs of the settlers. After Rev. Benedict Flaget arrived in Baltimore in 1792 with Rev. John Baptist David and Stephen T. Badin, a seminarian, Bishop Carroll assigned Flaget to Fort Vincennes in the Indiana Territory because the small enrollment at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, did not warrant his remaining there. For two years Flaget served the people of the Vincennes area, deeply influencing the spiritual life of the residents, before Bishop Carroll recalled him to Baltimore in 1794.<sup>1</sup> But the spiritual welfare of that western outpost would concern Flaget for many years.

In 1808 at the request of Bishop Carroll, Rome created three new dioceses in the United States and its territories; one was Bardstown, Kentucky, with Rev. Benedict Flaget as first bishop. After learning of his appointment, Flaget traveled to France in 1810, hoping to obtain permission to refuse the post, but the Superior of the Sulpicians rejected his request. Flaget then set about recruiting French priests for the new diocese, and Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté and Rev. Guy Chabrat accompanied him on his return to Baltimore.<sup>2</sup>

Before Flaget's departure from Baltimore, Father David, the Superior of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, and Father John Dubois, the President of Mount St. Mary's, had asked him to obtain a copy of the Rule of St. Vincent de Paul, used by the French Sisters of Charity. In Paris, Flaget obtained a handwritten copy of the Rule and brought it to Emmitsburg on his return to Maryland. More than a year later, on 17 January 1812, Archbishop John Carroll and Rev. John Tessier, the American Superior of the Sulpicians, approved the American Rule, as Rev. John Dubois had translated and changed it to suit the American situation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1967). Hereinafter identified as NCE.

<sup>2</sup> NCE, 1:113, 145.

<sup>3</sup> NCE, 1:145, 157-158.



TO HIS BROTHER JOSEPH FLAGET

Bishop of Bardonia and New York

1793-1810

Portrait of Benedict Joseph Flaget.  
Collection of the De Andreis-Rosati Memorial Archives

After his consecration on 4 November 1810, Bishop Flaget remained in Maryland until May, when he set out for Bardstown, accompanied by Rev. John Baptist David and Rev. Guy Chabrat, who had volunteered for his diocese. Rev. Stephen Badin, the first priest ordained by Bishop Carroll, had been serving the Catholics of Kentucky since shortly after his ordination in 1793.<sup>4</sup>

Sometime after their arrival in Kentucky, Rev. John Baptist David wrote to Father Bruté in Maryland, asking him to obtain a copy of the Rules of the Sisters of Charity. Several months later, he again asked Bruté "to make me a copy of the rules . . . from which I could trace those of our Sisters." Bruté did copy the French Rule, but both David and Flaget also sought copies of the American Rule and Constitution, approved by Carroll and Tessier.

Although David insisted that the Kentucky foundation was a separate and independent community, letters to Bruté dated 1812, 1813, and 1814, in the Archives at the University of Notre Dame indicate that he sought to link the Nazareth community to Emmitsburg, but on his own terms. He wanted Sister Rose White, Sister Kitty Mullen,

<sup>4</sup> Henry De Courcy and John Gilmary Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (New York: P.J. Kenedy, 1904), 538.

or Sister Fanny Jordan assigned to Bardstown to assist him with the Kentucky community; all had entered Mother Seton's community on his advice. However, by the fall of 1814, Sister Rose had charge of the orphanage recently opened in Philadelphia, and Sister Kitty was seriously ill.<sup>5</sup>

Father Dubois, David's successor as Superior of the Emmitsburg Community, objected to the changes required for merging the two communities. After several letters to Archbishop Carroll outlining his position, Dubois closed the question on 27 December 1814, when he declared:

The constitution of the Sisters cannot be modified according to the various opinions of each Bishop. Each of them is at liberty to approve or disapprove of our constitutions for his diocese. If he does not approve of them, he can establish another community according to his own ideas.<sup>6</sup>

Although Father David made changes related to the ecclesiastical authority over the Nazareth community and the local superior's title before presenting the rule and constitution to Bishop Flaget for approval, the rules for the two communities were identical in almost every detail.

Because Vincennes was part of the Bardstown diocese, Bishop Flaget had assigned a priest there and continued his concern for the area where he had labored during his first two years in America. In 1825 he asked the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth to open a school in Vincennes. A band of four Sisters, under the leadership of Sister Harriet Gardiner, the fourth candidate to enter the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth on 18 April 1813, opened St. Clare Academy. During the next thirteen years, eight other members of the Nazareth community served in the town. Although the school prospered, the pastor's extended absences often deprived the Sisters and the parish of mass and the sacraments.<sup>7</sup> Writing to Nazareth on 27 September 1826, Sister Harriet Gardiner noted that illness was everywhere in the area:

<sup>5</sup> NCE, 1:173, 176-177.

<sup>6</sup> Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 3-F-17.

<sup>7</sup> Nazareth Archival Center, hereinafter identified as NAC, Book of Annals, 1:62. For additional information on the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, see Anna Blanche McGill, *The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky* (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1917).

Hardly can there be found one house, either in town or country, without some sick in it. The flu has carried off a great number of children. Fevers of every kind are prevailing. I am the only one well, and I think every day that my time has come. I feel much like it at present.<sup>8</sup>

Ten days later, 7 October 1826, Sister Harriet died. [Two of her sisters were also members of the Nazareth community. One, Mother Frances Gardiner, served alternate terms with Mother Catherine Spalding as Mother of the Nazareth community.]<sup>9</sup>

In a letter to Father Bruté at Mount St. Mary's, Bishop David cited two losses for Vincennes:

The poor city of Vincennes has just been visited in a most terrible manner. It has felt the loss, and Nazareth more, of the excellent Sister Harriet Gardiner, who conducted a very flourishing school that she had established . . . The second catastrophe is the blowing over, in a storm of the cathedral church that was being built, which was already roofed, and what is most singular, that it was only the sides that fell from the top to the bottom — the roof and gables had remained intact.<sup>10</sup>

According to information in the Archives at Nazareth from Sister Miriam Merimee, Sister Harriet's niece, the Bishop of Vincennes wrote to Nazareth to inform the Sisters "that the body of a Sister 'intact' had been found and that it was identified as that of Sister Harriet." When the Nazareth community granted the Bishop's request that Sister Harriet's body remain in Vincennes, the Bishop had her body placed in the Cathedral crypt.<sup>11</sup> [I have not been able to learn which Bishop was the writer — Bruté, De la Hailandiere, or St. Palais.] However, in 1877 Sister Harriet's remains were found in the crypt when they were preparing to bury Bishop St. Palais, and they were transferred

<sup>8</sup> NAC, Old Letter Book, 2:5.

<sup>9</sup> NAC, Minute Book of the Board of Trustees Meetings, 1.

<sup>10</sup> As quoted in Sister Mary Salesia Godecker, O.S.B., *Simon Bruté de Remur: First Bishop of Vincennes* (St. Meinrad, Indiana: St. Meinrad Historical Essays, 1931), 184.

<sup>11</sup> Information received from NAC.

to the church cemetery. In March 1993, the new library at Rivet High School in Vincennes was dedicated to the memory of Sister Harriet, and a plaque honoring her was presented to the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth at the dedication.<sup>12</sup>

After Father Ignatius Reynolds replaced Father John Baptist David as the ecclesiastical superior of the Nazareth Sisters in 1833, he withdrew the Sisters from Vincennes for a time.<sup>13</sup> On 21 July 1834, while Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté was giving a retreat for the Sisters at St. Joseph's in Emmitsburg, he received the documents naming him the first bishop of the newly created Diocese of Vincennes, comprising all of Indiana and part of Illinois.<sup>14</sup> From that day he frequently mentioned the possibility of obtaining Sisters from St. Joseph's for his diocese. When he left to take up his new duties, the Sisters gave him a purse of over \$200.<sup>15</sup> On reaching Bardstown, he wrote Mother Rose:

I am left much in doubt as for recalling to Vincennes the Sisters of Nazareth or asking some of St. Joseph's. I would call for you . . . did I think you could grant me immediately the four that would justify in Vincennes an academy. But first, I know that you are more inclined to good large poor schools, or hospitals, or orphan asylums, than a pay school or academy . . . A pity that the two houses, Nazareth and St. Joseph's can scarcely now be united, as the bishops here wish it so much; but I see little real opening as yet.<sup>16</sup>

From Bardstown Bruté traveled with Bishop Flaget and Bishop John Purcell of Cincinnati to St. Louis for the consecration of the new St. Louis Cathedral on 25 October. Three days later Bishop Flaget, assisted by Bishops Rosati and Purcell, consecrated Bishop Bruté, then traveled with Bruté to Vincennes, and installed him there on 5 November.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Information received from NAC, and from personal visits to the cathedral and cemetery in Vincennes.

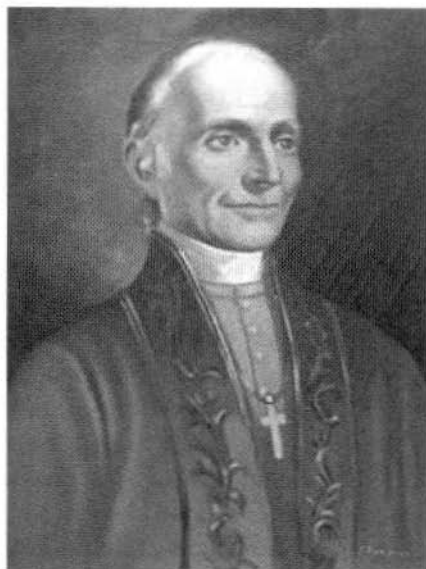
<sup>13</sup> Godecker, *Bruté*, 235.

<sup>14</sup> NAC, 2:842.

<sup>15</sup> Godecker, *Bruté*, 217.

<sup>16</sup> Archives of St. Joseph Provincial House, 7-3-1-3, hereinafter identified as SJPH. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté in *His Connection with the Community, 1812-1839* (Emmitsburg: St. Joseph Provincial House, 1884), 407-408, hereinafter identified as RSGB.

<sup>17</sup> NCE, 2:842.



Simon Gabriel Bruté, C.M.

*Image Collection of the Vincentian Studies Institute*

When Bishop Bruté came to Vincennes, he brought the Bible he had exchanged with Mother Seton in 1813. A note in his hand on the title page states: "This Bible was in the hands of Mother Seton on her death, 4th Jany. 1821 and had been so since 1813." Both Bruté's Bible and Mother Seton's own copy of the same Bible, printed by Mathew Carey at Philadelphia in 1805, are now in Indiana. Bruté's copy is part of the Bruté Library at the Old Cathedral in Vincennes; Mother Seton's copy is in the Rare Book Collection, Memorial Library, the University of Notre Dame.<sup>18</sup>

But even before this precious relic arrived, Mother Seton's spiritual daughters had visited Vincennes. On 1 November 1828, Sister Francis Xavier Love, the last Sister to enter St. Joseph's in Mother Seton's lifetime, wrote to Mother Augustine Decount, announcing their arrival in Vincennes on their way to open the hospital in St. Louis:

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<sup>18</sup> Ellin M. Kelly, *Elizabeth Seton's Two Bibles: Her Notes and Markings* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1977), 17-18.

We went to confession here, assisted at High Mass and received Holy Communion, the first time since leaving home. Four Sisters of Charity from Kentucky are here. After Mass they took us home with them . . . We had dinner prayers, dined in silence, reading at table as at home, long grace after dinner, a short prayer kneeling, and then recreation . . . . The Sisters spoke of our dear Sister Agnes who had sent them St. Vincent's hymn . . . . I sang it for them as they did not know the air. The stage arrived before Vesper time.<sup>19</sup>

Bishop Bruté persuaded Father Reynolds to allow the Nazareth Sisters to return. On 18 January 1835, he announced to Mother Rose: "I expect our Sisters of Nazareth after [March] 25th — like yours . . . Mrs. Grandville keeps the school while awaiting them . . . . I want to hope, however, for our Sisters of the Valley."<sup>20</sup> Again on 28 May he wrote: "Our Sisters here do well. They have four boarders, thirty-five day scholars, and good promise."<sup>21</sup>

Late that summer, Bishop Bruté sailed for Europe to seek priests and assistance for his diocese. On his return in July 1836, eleven priests and several seminarians accompanied him. Two of the priests, Celestine de la Hailandiere and Maurice de St. Palais, eventually succeeded Bruté as Bishops of Vincennes.<sup>22</sup> But uncertainty about the girls' school continued. Before Bishop Bruté came to Baltimore for the Third Provincial Council, Bishop David wrote Mother Rose White on 17 March 1837, that Bruté was worried about his school:

As the Superiors of Nazareth are determined to withdraw the four Sisters who are at Vincennes, he will solicit you for some to replace them. I hope you will not refuse that favor to one who had served you so long, so faithfully, and so fruitfully. I don't approve of the resolution of the Sisters of Nazareth, but I have now no control or influence over them. There is a good deal to be done in that new diocese. If he can

<sup>19</sup> SJPH, 7-8-2-3:253a; and [Sister Josephine Craven], *Mother Augustine and Mother Xavier* (Emmitsburg, Maryland: St. Joseph Provincial House, 1938), 52-53.

<sup>20</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3:3.

<sup>21</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3:80.

<sup>22</sup> NCE, 7:404; and SJPH, 7-8-2:14.



obtain nothing, he will be compelled to form a new society out of the wreck of the old ones.<sup>23</sup>

In July after his return from Baltimore, Bishop Bruté wrote Mother Rose about his situation:

... our Sisters still remain with us, and their boarders were twenty . . . . Will they remain to open another year? I hope so, not yet certain.

My friends urge me to call . . . the Sisters [from St. Joseph's] to Terre Haute . . . . Nazareth could not help me with one farther than the four I had, but now, two being recalled, what can I do with two, even with hired hands? It is not their fault, having not novices enough, but indeed, I would have done better to take at once those of the Valley when I was coming, and at Nazareth they rather desired we should do so. Some delicacy prevented us . . . we regret it.

The two recalled are the Sisters of the work, the two school mistresses remain . . . . As I write, the thought comes to me of proposing that three might be granted, one for Sister Servant, two at the work. These two — I have permission from Nazareth — can remain with me to found a branch institution, but I doubt too much their ability, whilst you have such Sisters.<sup>24</sup>

Both Sisters were members in good standing at Nazareth, having made their vows the preceding 25 March, but had agreed to stay in Vincennes at Bruté's request.

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<sup>23</sup> SJPH, 7-1-2:10. See also Sister Mary Salesia Godecker, O.S.B., *History of Catholic Education in Indiana, A Survey of the Schools, 1702-1925* (Ferdinand, Indiana: Sisters of St. Benedict, 1926).

<sup>24</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3; and RSGB, 483-485.



Mother Rose White (1784-1841).

*Courtesy, Archives of the Daughters of Charity, Emmitsburg, MD*

The Bishop again apprised Mother Rose of his situation on 26 August:

I have, after much negotiating, obtained that two Sisters would be left to me . . . and [the] simple transfer of their obedience to me, if I bought the property [owned by the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth] which I have done . . . that I might undertake a new sisterhood with them . . . . Thus I remain owner of all-lot, house, and furniture, and two Sisters, Sebastia and Rosalia, the schoolmistresses, with me. Sisters Angela and Bridget [have] gone home. I call on the zeal of St. Joseph's to come forth and help. I can scarcely go on and secure my only first religious house in this vast diocese with these only two Sisters, but three more from St. Joseph's, one a head, might begin with great promise.<sup>25</sup>

Obviously, Bruté's plea was successful because by 25 September, when he wrote to Mother Rose, he had her promise of help. "I have no possible suggestion or desire as for the good Sister

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<sup>25</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3:4.

Servant you will send . . . . I need not to add that all you will state of the usual charges on my side for the travel, stay, etc. . . [or] if ever necessary, recall to your own blessed Valley, I will abide with."<sup>26</sup>

But shortly after Bishop Bruté became ill and went to St. Louis. In his absence, Rev. J. A. Vabret, one of the Eudist Fathers who had recently opened a college for boys in Vincennes, wrote Mother Rose, "Although [the bishop] is absent, good Mother, you need not fear to send the Sisters; they will be most welcome, and we shall consider it our duty to make their new abode as pleasant as possible."<sup>27</sup>

One month later, the Council at St. Joseph's named Sister Benedicta Parsons, the Treasurer of the community who had volunteered for Vincennes, as Sister Servant, and Sister Mary Margaret Cully as her companion. Sister Benedicta's brother was a doctor in Terre Haute; although he was a Protestant, his daughter became a boarder at St. Mary's Academy. Sister Benedicta's niece was the only student who died while the Emmitsburg Sisters had the academy in Vincennes. Seven or eight years old at the time, she wanted to be baptized before her death, and Bishop Bruté received her into the Church.<sup>28</sup>

When the Bishop wrote on 2 December, he noted, "The two poor [Nazareth] Sisters keep on in the most edifying manner. I went yesterday to examine the school; only seven boarders, besides three as candidates, and about thirty day scholars."<sup>29</sup>

Sister Benedicta and Sister Mary Margaret left Emmitsburg on 11 December.

Before their arrival in Vincennes, Bruté wrote to Mother Rose, explaining his plan. After the two Sisters from Emmitsburg were settled, he wanted the two Sisters from Nazareth to join the Emmitsburg community. He explained:

They did not leave of themselves their community but were authorized expressly by their Superior and Council with all the approbation of Bishop Chabrat to be now under my obedience with their vows until otherwise provided, either by the union thus solicited and sought for . . . to be fully accepted by you or trying

<sup>26</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3:87a.

<sup>27</sup> SJPH, 7-10-6:1.

<sup>28</sup> SJPH, 7-8-2-3:275a.

<sup>29</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3:87.

to form a small beginning of sisterhood and novitiate for it as well as we could.

As for the Rules observed by the Sisters of Nazareth, they had been a copy of those of St. Joseph's. When I was in Bardstown coming here I asked to see the Rules, I found the book put in my hands was the very one which Mr. Dubois had made me copy of my own writing to be sent to Mr. David. I see, however, some slight changes . . . which I said in my letter would have most simply and "unconditionally" to be reduced to St. Joseph's rules.<sup>30</sup>

But not everyone shared Bishop Bruté's enthusiasm about the Sisters going to Vincennes. Writing to Mother Rose on 18 December, Bishop John Dubois of New York, the former Superior of the Emmitsburg community, commented:

It grieves me to hear that Sisters are to be sent to Illinois [sic]. How great soever my esteem for Bishop Bruté, this dispersion of our Sisters over the United States may be prejudicial to the spirit of their holy institute. It is impossible for Superiors to visit them and direct their movements, and their recall is attended with innumerable difficulties. You remember that, when I was Superior, I refused to send Sisters so far and advised Bishop David to establish a branch unconnected with St. Joseph's although under a similar rule . . . Bishop Bruté might have been supplied much more conveniently from Kentucky.<sup>31</sup>

Bishop Bruté reported to Mother Rose from New Orleans on 20 January 1838: "I had the consolation to see Sister Benedicta and Sister Mary Margaret at the landing at Evansville. [They] arrived there the day I was coming to take the boat for New Orleans [where his doctor had ordered him to spend the winter], or [the] day before."<sup>32</sup> On his return to Vincennes, he wrote Mother Rose on 1 May that his plan had

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<sup>30</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3:88.

<sup>31</sup> SJPH, 1-3-3:68.

<sup>32</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3:89.

failed: "After my arrival three weeks ago . . . I did see well enough how it would end for the two Sisters. Mr. Reynolds [the Superior of the Nazareth community] wrote that they would be received with joy at their Motherhouse, as they had left regularly and with such good intention. Bishop Chabrat wrote the same . . . . They went, and in two days they were in Louisville. "But the loss of two teachers placed his school in jeopardy, and Bruté expressed his concern to Mother Rose: ". . . a much better ground and better house [are] exchanged for what I had bought from Nazareth . . . . Sister Benedicta [was] quite pleased after she had visited it . . . . Now for our next, greater blessings still, I hope. Say first, the coming of a couple of Sisters more, indispensable now."<sup>33</sup>

On 28 May, Sister Benedicta reported to Mother Rose:

We have scholars offering daily, boarders too, if we could take them. We have now a fine property; spacious yards and garden, good houses — three of them on the same lot within the enclosure — and in a short time we shall have everything fixed very conveniently . . . . We cannot do much credit to St. Joseph's here in the West, where people are smarter than they are generally thought to be by folks in the East, if you do not send us help. Two Sisters cannot do properly all that ought to be done, even to half . . . . You know my strength; I am perfectly willing to exhaust it in so great and good a work, but if I do, half will remain undone, and the other half be not well done.

We have to part with Ann Brown, whom we will send you soon, the only girl who knows anything about housekeeping. [Ann, or Nancy, Brown entered at St. Joseph's in September 1838. Sister Aurelia Brown was on several missions before returning in 1844 to the Motherhouse at Emmitsburg where she remained until her death, 3 May 1857.] We have some others who work half time for board and schooling, but I must be continually behind them to tell and show

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<sup>33</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3:90.

them. Ten children in the house besides, to wash and iron, mend, cook, and clean after, and to nurse when sick — two now sick . . . . The dear Bishop has paid so much money to fix us comfortably, we cannot expect him to support the house too. The people, in general, are far too poor to do it. Unless we take boarders, we cannot do an extensive good for the diocese.<sup>34</sup>

But things got worse before they got better. On 3 June, Father Vabret wrote Mother Rose:

Being entrusted by the Bishop with the care of your good Sisters, I think it my duty to make you acquainted with their present situation and entreat you to pity them. Both of them are sick . . . . Sister Benedicta has been confined to her bed during two days; Sister Mary Margaret had the whole charge, but she also has been the victim of her zeal and became sick. Happily for them, they have three days of vacation . . . otherwise they would be obliged to close their school . . . . The school is too large for two Sisters only. They are obliged to refuse admittance to many applying. The number of boarders is increasing, but they are obliged to receive as few as possible, being incapable of attending to any greater number. Sister Benedicta has been, until now, stronger than she has been for a long time . . . . She would want to be in many places at the very same time, but, good Mother, until she will have acquired a universal omnipresent capacity, she needs your agency to furnish her with three healthy Sisters.<sup>35</sup>

Responding to the pleas of Bishop Bruté, Sister Benedicta, and Father Vabret, the Council at St. Joseph's named Sister Gabriella Doyle and Sister Aurea for Vincennes.<sup>36</sup>

In October the Bishop thanked Mother Rose for giving the Sisters permission to teach music and drawing in the school at

<sup>34</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3; and RSGB, 537-538.

<sup>35</sup> SJPH, 7-10-6:3.

<sup>36</sup> SJPH, 7-8-2-3:274.

Vincennes. On 4 January 1839, the anniversary of Mother Seton's death, Bishop Bruté commented: "My heart is full of confidence in Our Lord that your Vincennes also will succeed . . . . Four such excellent daughters of such a Motherhouse."<sup>37</sup> Three months later he wrote his last letter to St. Joseph's, noting that the school had thirty-seven enrolled: "Waiting for 370 as you count and more in New York; Vincennes [is] not a New York!"<sup>38</sup>



St. Xavier Cathedral, Vincennes, IN.  
*Public Domain*

On 27 June, Sister Benedicta informed Mother Rose of Bishop Bruté's death: "How shall I express the loss sustained by his devoted brethren, his priests, and especially by us, myself in particular so long acquainted with him and for years and years receiving so many tokens of his kindness . . . . He died last night about half-past one o'clock in the most edifying manner."<sup>39</sup> The Bishop was buried beneath the high altar of St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Vincennes on 28 June. The second Bishop of Vincennes, Rev. Celestine de la Hailandiere traveled to France where he was consecrated in Paris on 18 August. While in France, he made arrangements for members of the Sisters of Providence of Ruille-sur-Loire to come to the Vincennes diocese. On his return to Vincennes Bishop de la Hailandiere began recruiting prospective postulants for the Sisters of Providence. A French postulant spent much of 1839-40 with the Sisters of Charity in Vincennes, and two other

<sup>37</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3:94.

<sup>38</sup> SJPH, 7-3-1-3; and RSGB, 583.

<sup>39</sup> SJPH, 7-8-2-3:331.

postulants joined her there in 1840. In August Sister Gabriella Doyle, then seven years vocation, who had been on mission in Vincennes for two years, applied for a dispensation from her vows to join the Sisters of Providence. By the end of August she and the three postulants had moved to Terre Haute to await the arrival of Mother Theodore Guerin and her companions.<sup>40</sup>

When the Sisters of Providence arrived in the United States, they received hospitality from the American Sisters of Charity in New York, Philadelphia, Frederick, and Cincinnati. On the advice of Bishop John Hughes, these Sisters traveled in secular clothes until they arrived in Vincennes, where they again put on their religious habits.<sup>41</sup>

In 1841 Sister Frances Ann Kennedy, another teacher from Vincennes, returned to Emmitsburg and withdrew from the community. On Christmas Day she entered the Sisters of Providence.<sup>42</sup>

When the Council at Emmitsburg agreed to open a girls' orphanage in St. Louis in the spring of 1843, they named Sister Benedicta Parsons to direct the new institution, and Sister Celestia Conroy was named Sister Servant to replace her.<sup>43</sup> In a letter to Father Deluol on 30 April, Sister Aurea complained about Sister Celestia's attitude and treatment toward the Sisters in Vincennes.<sup>44</sup> Sister Paulina Kennedy was then named Sister Servant; however, Bishop de la Hailandiere complained to Bishop Blanc of New Orleans that Sister Paulina was not well qualified.<sup>45</sup> The situation apparently deteriorated rapidly, as this entry in the Council Book for 28 September 1843, indicates:

The Bishop of Vincennes having consented to our Sisters being withdrawn from that establishment, it has been decided in this day's Council that as soon as arrangements can be made Sister Paulina and her Sisters will leave. Sister Paulina will go to the hospital of St. Louis as bookkeeper; Sister Aurea will go to St. Peter's Asylum, Cincinnati; Sister Susanna to St. Vincent's School, St. Louis; and Sister Adele to the German Asylum, Cincinnati.

<sup>40</sup> SJPH, 7-10-6:4 and 5.

<sup>41</sup> Sister Mary Borromeo Brown, *The History of the Sisters of Providence of Saint-Mary-of-the-Woods*, Vol. 1, 1806-1856 (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1949), 67, 68, 69, 71.

<sup>42</sup> Brown, *History of the Sisters*, 1:151.

<sup>43</sup> SJPH, 7-8-2:305.

<sup>44</sup> SJPH, 7-10-6:7.

<sup>45</sup> Archives of the University of Notre Dame from the papers of Bishop Blanc.



Also under the same date, the following was noted: "Sister Celestia's petition to leave the Community granted. We give her \$65 and clothes."<sup>46</sup> Sister Celestia Conroy, a niece of Bishop Michael Egan of Philadelphia, was at the time twenty-six years vocation. Through the arrangement of Bishop de la Hailandiere, she and the former Sister Ann Austin McGrann, who had also been on mission in Vincennes but had withdrawn from the Sisters of Charity on 2 March 1843, became postulants for the Sisters of Providence early in 1844 and received the habit at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods on 19 August. They were the third and fourth Sisters of Charity from the Vincennes mission to enter the Sisters of Providence. However, the first one did not remain. Sister Gabriella Doyle was really Bishop de la Hailandiere's protégée; he planned to place her at the head of the Sisters of Providence. But Mother Theodore Guerin refused, and Miss Doyle withdrew and set up a school in Terre Haute to compete with the academy operated by the Sisters of Providence. The other three lived out their lives as Sisters of Providence and are buried in the cemetery at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.<sup>47</sup>

Sister Adele Durm, who was on mission in Vincennes when the Sisters of Charity were withdrawn, provided the following account of the situation:

Two French heads knocked together, Bishop de la Hailandiere and Mother Xavier [Clark]. Some Sisters had lost their vocation there. Mother Xavier thought the Bishop had something to do with it and wrote to him [that] he oughtn't to interfere with the Sisters. He wrote back to her [that] if she wasn't willing to trust her Sisters with him, she might take them away then.<sup>48</sup>

After word came from Emmitsburg, Sister Paulina Kennedy and Sister Adele went to inform Father Martin, who was the Vicar General and the Sisters' confessor. He urged them to go to the Bishop. But the Bishop was not as upset as Father Martin. When Sister Paulina asked if the Sisters were the cause, the Bishop:

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<sup>46</sup> SJPH, 3-3-5-843.

<sup>47</sup> SJPH, 7-8-2; and Brown, *History of the Sisters*, 1:345.

<sup>48</sup> SJPH, 7-10-6:8.

... at once assumed the responsibility of the recall . . . and in broken sentences he expressed his regret that his impetuosity had brought about such a disaster . . . So the Sisters of Providence came in, and we came out without trunks, leaving our pianos and all else behind. I cooked for them four or five weeks while we were waiting for money from home to pay our traveling expenses. Bishop de la Hailandiere came and offered Sister Pauline a \$100 to pay them, but she refused politely . . . "Our Superiors will pay our expenses."

The Sisters of Charity left Vincennes on 28 December 1843. Although Sisters from the Emmitsburg community never returned to Vincennes, they did return to the diocese. After Bishop de la Hailandiere resigned in 1847, his successor, Rev. Stephen Bazin of Mobile, held the office only six months before his death on 23 April 1848. The Vicar General, Rev. Maurice de St. Palais, who had volunteered for the diocese and travelled from Paris to Vincennes with Bishop Bruté, when he returned in July 1836, succeeded as the fourth Bishop. Consecrated on 14 January 1849, he served the diocese until his death in 1877. Five years before his death, Sisters from Emmitsburg opened St. Mary's Hospital in Evansville, Indiana, on 16 July 1872.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> NCE, 7:464.



Francis Silas Chatard.  
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The fifth Bishop of Vincennes, Francis Silas Chatard, had direct ties with the Emmitsburg community. His grandfather, Dr. Pierre Chatard, had served as physician for Mrs. Seton and her family from her arrival in Baltimore in 1808. His grandmother and Mother Seton continued their friendship after the Sisters moved to Emmitsburg; the Chatards' daughters were boarders at St. Joseph's Academy for a time. Bishop Chatard attended Mount Saint Mary's, and his sister, Sister Julianna Chatard, a graduate of St. Joseph's Academy, became a Sister of Charity. Like Bishop Bruté, who trained as a physician before entering the seminary, Francis Chatard followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, receiving his degree in medicine from the University of Maryland in 1856. But after a year of residency at the Baltimore Alms House, he abandoned medicine to begin studies for the priesthood at Rome in November 1857. After his ordination he served as vice rector and rector of the North American College in Rome before Pope Leo XIII named him the fifth Bishop of Vincennes in 1878. Although the cathedral and title of the diocese remained in Vincennes, Bishop Chatard established his residence in Indianapolis. Encouraged by his interest in medicine and his desire to establish hospitals in the diocese, the Emmitsburg community opened St. Vincent's Infirmary, later Hospital, in Indianapolis on 27 April 1881. Rome approved the transfer of the title of the diocese to Indianapolis in 1898. Bishop Chatard died in 1918.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> NCE, 3:519 and 7:464-465.

In 1968 Indiana became part of the East Central Province of the Daughters of Charity. Although first established in Chicago in January 1969, Mater Dei Provincialate moved its offices to Evansville in September 1971, after acquiring the property on New Harmony Road where the present administration building and residence opened in 1973.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Sister Virginia Kingsbury, *Come to the Water: The First Twelve Years of the East Central Province Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent De Paul in the United States, 1969-1981* (Evansville, Indiana: Mater Dei Provincialate, 1988), 62-65, 108-110.

